

to use the defense technologies that were developed in the 1980's to build the high-tech jobs here at home of the 1990's. And that will be a help in the future.

Audience member. Sea Wolf!

The President. Well, we hung in there with the Sea Wolf—we did the Sea Wolf. I did that. We reversed that decision. That's right.

I also want to just say a special word of thanks to all of you for braving this weather and for coming out and for bringing your messages as well as your support. My family and I are very grateful for the friendship that we've been given all across this country, especially in the last month as I've dealt with the loss of my mother, and we've tried to deal with a lot of the challenges facing our country. And when you come out here and stand in this rain after the tough snow you had last night, it's very moving to me personally. I thank you for that.

I want you to know one other thing. We've got a lot of tough challenges still ahead facing our country. We've got a lot of hard work to do in the Congress. We are facing the health care issue, the welfare reform issue. We're going to try to redo the unemployment system of the country. We have got a lot of big challenges facing this country, but we're going to meet them with your help and your support. And I just want you to tell these folks standing behind me that you do support them when they take the chances and show the courage to change the country and move it toward the 21st century.

Thank you very much, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:47 a.m. at the Groton/New London Airport.

Exchange With Reporters in Norwich, Connecticut February 24, 1994

Health Care Reform

Q. Are you troubled at all, sir, by word coming off the Hill from the likes of Chairman Pete Stark that the employer mandates and the alliances are in trouble, that he sees little if any chance of them getting through?

The President. No. Mr. Stark has his own plan, and it's sort of a modified single-payer plan. So you wouldn't need the alliances if you did what he wanted, you know, if the Government paid for it all and fixed the price, if you had—just expanded for Medicare. But we see no evidence that beyond that subcommittee that that plan could pass.

But on the other hand, he does want universal coverage, and he wants comprehensive benefits. And so I consider him an ally because he wants that. He's been in this area a long time, and he has a fixed view about how he thinks it should be done. And so anything that's sent to his subcommittee obviously he's going to try to—he's going to see that it reflects his view. We'll just see what happens.

I think—but keep in mind, you've got that committee that a bill would have to come out of, and you've got two other House committees, then you've got two Senate committees. So you've got subcommittees in all the committees, five of them, and then the ultimate committees, and then the battle on the Floor. And this is just beginning.

So I'm not concerned about it because I think what everybody's going to have to do is to ask and answer the questions that at least he's asked and answered: Are you for universal coverage? Do you want reasonable benefits? And all these people here who have written me these letters make the best case for having a simple, clear comprehensive system that covers everybody and that involves things like prescription medicine. And I know you've been briefed on the letters they wrote me and how the system's affected them. But I consider, therefore, even though Pete Stark has a totally different view about how it ought to be done than I do, what he wants to do is what I want to do.

So I'm not troubled by that. We'll just have to see what comes out of that subcommittee, what comes out of the Ways and Means Committee as a whole, and where we go. I just think that the main issue now is going to be getting all the Members of Congress to sit down and ask and answer in a very calm and clearheaded way these hard questions that relate to making sure everybody has guaranteed private insurance, having the benefits be comprehensive to include pre-

ventive and primary care and things like this prescription-drug benefit that we're here to talk about. If that happens, than I think we're on the way to victory. We'll work out everything else, but I'm going to have a lot of very good conversations with people in both parties who are interested in this to deal with those big questions. If you can get there, I'm convinced we'll work out the details. I'm not worried.

NOTE: The exchange began at 2 p.m. in Slater Hall at the Norwich Free Academy. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks to Senior Citizens in Norwich

February 24, 1994

Thank you very much. I think John Kiszkiel did a great job of introducing me and talking about the problem. Sam, when you get done, maybe we ought to run him for office around here. [*Laughter*] He did a great job, didn't he? I thank him for opening his pharmacy this morning and for introducing me to some of his customers. I'll mention them in a moment.

I also want to thank Charles West, who, if you notice, when I heard Charles West up here talking, I thought, he's the only guy up here that doesn't have an accent. He's from Arkansas. [*Laughter*] He's like me. So I loved hearing him talk. But I want to thank Charles and Ron Ziegler for coming here and expressing the support of the pharmacists of America and the people who run our drug-stores all over the country for the administration's health care initiative. I am very grateful to them. And their support will be pivotal as we go into this critical session of Congress and try to pass the health care bill.

I thank your Members of Congress for being here, especially our host, Sam Gejdenson, who has done a great deal of work in Congress on a number of issues that are important. On health care and defense conversion and job training and exports, if there is an issue that requires us to be on the cutting edge of change, you can bet that Sam Gejdenson will be on the cutting edge of the issue. And I really appreciate that.

I thank my friend Barbara Kennelly for coming here and for her support and outstanding work in Congress. My longtime friend Senator Lieberman, you heard him talking about that, I actually worked in his first campaign for the State senate when we were both in our twenties, and that was a day or two ago. [*Laughter*] And my friend of many years Senator Chris Dodd, who talked about his connections to this wonderful community and who is really working hard on this health care issue as he has on all human resource issues over the years, I thank him for that. There are many others in the audience that I can't mention, State and local officials, including my old classmate, your attorney general, Richard Blumenthal. I'm glad to see him here, and a recent father.

I want to thank our host, the Norwich Free Academy—this is a fascinating school with a great history—the administration, the teachers, and all others, especially Mary Lou Bargnesi and everybody that's made me feel so welcome here today.

And I'd also like to say just a special word about how nice it is for me to be back in Connecticut. Connecticut has been awfully good to me, since long before I ever thought I'd be up here running for the President. I went to law school here. The most important thing that ever happened to me happened here: I met my wife. When I kissed my wife and daughter goodbye this morning, they were sort of jealous that I was coming here even after we'd seen all the snow on television last night. [*Laughter*]

This State and this congressional district were good to me in the last campaign for President, and I'm doing my best to keep faith with the commitments I made. I also have to say I've been immensely impressed, as a fanatic basketball fan, with your basketball team this year. I think they've got a good chance to get to Charlotte, but I can't promise to cheer for them if they play Arkansas. It's amazing, you know, when I come in late at night, sometimes they show these basketball games fairly late at night; it's one thing that I still get to do. Most of my interests and hobbies are restricted to some extent by my job, but at least late at night I can channel